



News Release

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Federal-state team plans to restore marsh in Blackwater Refuge

Baltimore – Two federal and one state agency met Feb. 28 to begin studying ways to restore up to 5,000 acres of marsh in the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Dorchester County, Md. The Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is leading a team of scientists from the Corps, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Blackwater has lost about 7,000 acres of marshland out of its more than 17,000 acres of wetlands, woodlands and croplands over the last several decades.

“That ranks as one of the most significant examples of wetland loss in the Chesapeake Bay watershed,” said Steven Kopecky, a Corps geographer who is managing the project.

The team will seek solutions to problems in the refuge that have led to the wetland losses, which have averaged over 100 acres a year. Those problems include saltwater intrusion, altered marsh hydrology, sea-level rise and damage from the invasive nutria.

“We plan to start with small demonstration-type projects and evaluate these projects,” Kopecky said. “If successful, we will attempt restoration on a larger scale. Ultimately, there is the opportunity to restore up to 7,000 acres of marshland habitats, making Blackwater potentially one of the largest marsh restoration projects on the East Coast.”

Blackwater, which is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is an important wildlife refuge on the Eastern Shore and plays a key part in the overall ecology of the bay. The refuge provides critical habitat for a number of bird and animal species, and spawning habitat for aquatic life.

“This project represents a critical initiative in preserving and managing the fragile wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay,” Kopecky said.

The team will work closely with the academic community the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited and other government agencies and non-profit organizations.

The feasibility study, which is expected to take two years, will follow three parallel tracks: a quick hydrological fix, a long-term hydraulic study and a marsh restoration demonstration project.

Media List

<i>Baltimore Sun</i> , 410-752-6049	SD 012
<i>The Daily Banner</i> , Cambridge, 410-228-6547	SD 126
<i>The Daily Times</i> , Salisbury, 410-749-7290	SD 083
<i>The Capital</i> , Annapolis, 410-280-5953	SD 017
AP Eastern Shore, 410-263-0233	SD 008
<i>Star-Democrat</i> , Easton, 410-770-4019	SD 045
<i>Corps Report</i> , 301-587-1081	SD 026
<i>The Dorchester Star</i> , Cambridge, 410-228-0685	
<i>Salisbury News & Advertiser</i> , 410-749-5073	
<i>Crisfield Times</i> , Crisfield, 410-968-1197	
<i>Worcester County Messenger</i> , Pocomoke City, 410-957-4314	
<i>Somerset Herald</i> , Princess Anne, 410-651-3785	
<i>Washington Post</i> , Annapolis Bureau, 410-267-6972	

Environmental Groups

Sierra Club, 410-792-2938

Clean Water Action, 410-235-8816

Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 410-280-3513

Save Our Streams, 410-766-3932

National Wildlife Federation, 202-797-6646

Audobon Naturalist Society, 202-797-6646

Maryland Wetlands Committee, 410-442-5639

Maryland Conservation Council, 301-375-7988

Others

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